

### **Extending Gaventa: A Foucauldian Analysis of *Power and Powerlessness***

John Gaventa's 1980 book *Power and Powerlessness: Quiescence and Rebellion in an Appalachian Valley* is a classic piece of political science literature. The book explores the fraught relations between residents of the Clear Fork Valley (CFV), a subregion of central Appalachia, and the American Association (AA), a London-based multinational corporation that holds most of the valley's land and coal resources (e.g. Gaventa 1980, vi-vii). Gaventa makes use of the "faces of power" literature within political science to describe the complicated and overlapping ways in which the AA exercises power to achieve their interests at the valley's people's expense. Each face of power describes a different way actors may behave in a power relationship. Gaventa places particular focus on what Steven Lukes has termed the third face of power, which describes how elites use ideology to make the powerless act voluntarily against their own interests to the benefit of the powerful (e.g. Gaventa 1980, 21). A third face-style analysis allows Gaventa to tackle an important, difficult question: why, given the AA's exploitation of the valley's resources and people, do the CFV's residents seldom protest the corporation. Gaventa uses Lukes's theoretical perspective to demonstrate how ideological manipulation contributes to the people's acquiescence.

Gaventa's book does not include discussion of another prominent theoretical framework within the political science literature on power. The conceptualization of power relations Michel Foucault puts forward, which researchers sometimes refer to as the fourth face of power (e.g. Digeser 1992), overlaps with the third face in some regards, but differs from Luke's understanding of power in fundamental ways. Whereas the third face holds that actors have objective interests, the fourth face postulates that power itself produces subjects, their interests, their prospects for resistance, and what they consider truth. While the third face sees power as

something that politically strong actors possess and others do not, the fourth face sees power as a series of relationships in which everyone, regardless of their social position, constantly participates (Digeser 1992, 982-985). Had Gaventa also used the Foucauldian notion of power, then he would perhaps have found even more insights into power's operations within the CFV.

One obvious reason Gaventa did not use Foucault's ideas is that they were not yet integrated into the faces of power literature while Gaventa was writing *Power and Powerlessness*; Digeser would not categorize Foucault's arguments as the fourth face until twelve years after the book's publication (e.g. Digeser 1992). More importantly, the third face's originator Steven Lukes has reacted harshly to Foucault's views on power. Lukes sees Foucault's contention that power produces subjects and resistance as too deterministic. Lukes additionally writes that Foucault's work does not allow for solid explorations of activists' normative frameworks because the fourth face abandons objective truths and interests (Lukes 2005, 91-95). Thus, Lukes thinks Foucault's work is useful for little else than guiding empirical analyses of complacency within power relations (2005, 107). Along these lines, Gaventa may avoid discussion of Foucault's viewpoint in *Power and Powerlessness* because he feels the need to depict subjects and interests as essential in order to conduct a convincing study of rebellion.

In this paper, I bring Gaventa into conversation with Foucault to illustrate how, despite Lukes's assertions to the contrary, Foucault's notion of power is useful for realistic, empirical studies of rebellion. After an exposition of the four faces and Lukes's criticism of Foucault, the essay uses Foucault to extend Gaventa's explorations of community media projects in the CFV and Appalachian welfare politics during the 1960s and 1970s. The community media projects exemplify what Foucault calls Parrhesia, or "eruptive truth speaking" (Ransom 1997, 158-165) because they establish new subjects, truths, and power relations through the act of free speaking.

Gaventa could have probed rebellion surrounding welfare politics more deeply by (as some feminist Foucauldian scholars have done) framing welfare fraud (which was common in Appalachia during the 1960s and 1970s) as a form of resistance to state administrators' invasive attempts to mold welfare recipients' subjectivities.

### **The Four Faces of Power**

This section covers four faces, including the first two "liberal" faces, the "radical" third face, and the Foucault-inspired fourth face. Gaventa's explorations of the various faces' manifestations in central Appalachia will receive particular attention. Foucault broke from older social science notions of power by claiming that power does not repress subjects, prevent them from knowing their true selves and interests, or block rebellion. Power, claims Foucault, produces subjects, their interests, and their openings for resistance.

The first two faces of power, known as the "pluralist" or "liberal faces," conceive of power relations as competitions between self-determined, fully-aware individuals with similar resources facing off on an even playing field (Digeser 1992, 979; Gaventa 1980, 40). In the first face (originally postulated by Robert Dahl), *A* makes *B* do what *A* would not do otherwise. In the second face (first conceived by Peter Bachrach and Morton Baratz), *A* manipulates institutional procedures and mobilizes preexisting biases to prevent *B* from raising the issues most important to *B* (Digeser 1992, 979). The liberal faces assume that both *A* and *B* know exactly what they are doing in any relationship. Faces one and two require political participants to act with intentionality and know power is being exercised (Digeser 1992, 987). Gaventa explains that social scientists with liberal and/or pluralist conceptions of power tend to think the American political system is sufficiently open to political challengers. Thus, seeing few overt

and intentional challenges to local elites from Appalachia's working class, liberal and pluralist researchers typically ascribe central Appalachia's poverty to its citizens' assumed personal defects (such as their supposed fatalism, culture of poverty, or religiosity) rather than structural factors (such as the coal industry's exploitation of the region) (Gaventa 1980, 40). Gaventa argues that the first two faces cannot explain cases of non-participation, in which people do not raise issues or offer any challenge despite living under oppressive conditions (1980, vi-vii and 11).

Gaventa challenges the first face of power on the grounds that it does not account for all of the obstacles to political organizing facing the underprivileged. Dahl contends that cases in which *A* makes *B* do something that *B* would not do otherwise are the only observable and significant instances of power's exercise. Dahl's approach assumes that a person's interests are best measured through directly-observable political participation and that decision making apparatuses in modern democracies are fundamentally representative and always open to all minority views (Gaventa 1980, 5-6). Given that liberal theories of power see the system as open to the poor's participation, advocates of the first face assume that when the poor do not participate in politics it is because they are content with the present state of inequality (Gaventa 1980, 3). Rather than a lack of opportunity, the first face's advocates explain the underprivileged's non-participation as resulting from apathy or cultural insularity. They assume that the poor would be able to participate without obstacle simply by educating themselves or adapting new cultural values (Gaventa 1980, 7-8)<sup>1</sup>. Gaventa does not deny the existence and

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<sup>1</sup> Dahl even seems to argue that the discontented should not necessarily seek government redress for their problems. He holds that activists, who he terms "homo politicus," are a relatively rare breed and that most people are instead "homo civicus," his phrase for those who see political action as less useful than hard work and personal adaption to uncertain circumstances (qtd. Gaventa 1980, 6). The homo civicus/homo politicus distinction, while not meant to discourage political participation, suggests that most Americans have the ability and resources to do well

importance of instances of the first face of power. For example, he writes about the Jellico movement of 1893, in which miners in Jellico Tennessee organized against their employers and won one of the most generous mining contracts of the nineteenth century, as an instance of the first face of power (1980, 73). However, Gaventa also writes that the first face often leads to condescending depictions of the poor and faces a significant analytical stumbling block. It cannot explain why some poor people engage in political organizing while others with similar levels of education and cultural priorities do not (1980, 8). Dahl's approach cannot explain why miners in Jellico's neighboring town of Yellow Creek, despite their similar culture and working conditions, did not also revolt (1980, 72-73).

While less critical of the second face of power, Gaventa nonetheless finds this approach ultimately unsatisfying. In the second face of power, *A* may advance her own issues while burying *B*'s issues by appealing to ingrained cultural biases or manipulating loaded institutional procedures (254). The second face also holds that *B* may simply neglect to bring up her own issues because *B* expects *A* to win any political contest and possibly sanction *B* for rebellion. Either way, *B*'s issues do not receive full debate in recognized decision making arenas (Gaventa 1980, 14). Gaventa deploys the second face to explain some instances of political conflict in the Clear Fork Valley. Corrupt union officials have manipulated union bureaucracy to prevent the rank-and-file's issues from receiving attention by holding UMWA conventions far away from mining communities, so that the most oppressed cannot show up to voice their complaints (1980, 185). Elites have mobilized biases by appealing to culturally-ingrained fear of outsiders to discourage CFV residents from cooperating with social workers in War on Poverty programs

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without political complaint and implies that activism is a relatively unusual decision that only those with developed political sensitivities ought to pursue (Gaventa 1980, 7).

(1980, 162-163). Elites benefit from the poor's expectation of defeat and sanction in any contest: even without receiving explicit threats from their superiors, rank-and-file UMWA members have participated in the union's corruption despite personal misgivings because they expect to lose their union jobs and benefits if they voice dissatisfaction (1980, 183). Nonetheless, Gaventa points out that the second face cannot explain why sometimes the oppressed have no apparent grievances. While Bachrach and Baratz do raise the possibility that *A* manipulates the political process so well that she may be unaware of *B*'s grievances, they do not explain cases in which the oppressed do not understand their own problems and formulate grievances (Gaventa 1980, 11). Analysis of such cases requires the third face of power.

Originally developed by Steven Lukes, the third face of power is known as the "radical" face to distinguish it from the two liberal faces (Digeser 1992, 979). In the third face, *A* manipulates *B* into consciously wanting to do *A*'s bidding, even when doing so is contrary to *B*'s objective interests (Digeser 1992, 979). Dahl, Bachrach and Baratz would not recognize the third face of power as an actual instance of power's exercise because *B* cooperates with her own subjugation voluntarily; there is no intentional conflict (Digeser 1992, 979). Whereas the liberal faces require intentionality on the part of every actor in a power relation, no such requirement is present in the fourth face. *A* may not consciously manipulate *B* and *B* may not understand that she is being manipulated (Digeser 1992, 983). So long as *A* induces *B* to act against *B*'s interests, *A* exercises power over *B* even when neither *A* nor *B* recognizes this domination (Digeser 1992, 987). Thus, in the third face, power shapes conflict by determining non-conflict (Gaventa 1980, 13). Power relations are most firmly in place when *B* is so quiescent that she does not think to rebel or pursue her own interests in any observable way (Gaventa 1980, 12). The presence of open conflict indicates that power relations are fraying or in transition (Gaventa 1980, 4).

Gaventa describes two reasons *B* comes to follow *A*'s will against *B*'s interests: ideological manipulation and internalized helplessness. *B* may be accustomed to defeat and internalize feelings of political fecklessness, guilt, and hopelessness. *B* may also come to accept *A*'s values out of feelings of inadequacy (1980, 17). Gaventa explains that the poorest CFV residents, while most immersed in mountain culture, are "the most likely to accept the degradation or inadequacy ascribed to that culture by mass society or the local elite" (1980, 131), in part because the unemployed and underemployed residents spend long amounts of time viewing television programs that rarely depict their subculture in a positive light (1980, 220-221).

The Elite may also deploy ideology to secure *B*'s compliance. If *B* does not have an independent political consciousness (including self-determined symbols, resources, and biases), then *B* may not think to mount a direct, first face-style challenge to *A* (1980, 24). When *B* does engage *A* politically without having developed an authentic political consciousness, *B* will have a "split consciousness." *A* may manipulate *B*'s nascent, contradictory consciousness as it emerges, redirecting potentially rebellious energies toward inconsequential ends (1980, 18-19). This is how Gaventa explains split consciousness:

"the consciousness of the relatively powerless, even as it emerges, may be malleable, i.e., especially vulnerable to the manipulation of the power field around it. Through the invocation of myths or symbols, the use of threat or rumors, or other mechanisms of power, the powerful may be able to ensure that certain beliefs or actions emerge in one context while apparently contradictory grievances may be expressed in others" (1980, 19).

For example, the corrupt UMWA president Tony Boyle suppressed rank-and-file appeals to democratization of the union by appealing to miners' pre-existing myths and symbols. Boyle casted reformers as outsider provocateurs (1980, 194) and invoked a cult of personality around

former president Joe Lewis, who was said to have personally recruited Boyle as an organizer (Gaventa, 184). Thus, potentially rebellious feelings of union solidarity were twisted to maintain quiescence.

How, the reader may wonder, do advocates of the radical face claim to actually know the objective interests that *B* ought to be rebelling to secure? Using what Lukes calls a “relevant counterfactual” one may indirectly show that “if *A* had not acted (or failed to act) in a certain way... then *B* would have thought and acted differently from the way he does actually think and act” (Lukes, 2005, 44). One can show that *A* has in fact exercised power over *B* by showing that *B* would act differently were *B*’s relationship to *A* not in place (Gaventa 1980, 26). Researchers may demonstrate *A*’s manipulation of *B* by using a comparative method (such as showing that groups similar to *B* who have no relationship to *A* behave differently than *B*) or by pointing to instances in which *B* begins to behave differently as *A*’s power declines (Gaventa 1980, 27-28). Gaventa deploys relevant counterfactuals in his discussion of CFV residents’ relationship to the AA. Using a comparative approach, he demonstrates the company’s manipulation of the miners. Although miners in the same region who work for different companies had better working conditions, they were more likely to strike against their employers than the CFV’s miners (1980, 70-75). Gaventa similarly explains that CFV miners’ behavior changes as the company’s power wanes. Labor strikes in the CFV and legal challenges to the AA are more frequent when the company is in financial turmoil (1980, 76-80 and 245-250).

Digester expands the discussion on power’s faces by summarizing Michel Foucault’s conception of power, which he labels the fourth face. In the first three faces of power, *A* exercises power over *B* by dominating, outmaneuvering, and manipulating *B*, who may in turn resist or acquiesce depending on her level of consciousness and present openings for effective



rebellion. In the fourth face, power itself constitutes *A* and *B* as subjects, shapes what they conceive as their interests, and delimits the strategic options available to them. The liberal and radical faces of power take *A* and *B* as given, essential subjects with identifiable interests. The fourth views *A* and *B* as socially-constructed entities whose self-understandings and interests are themselves established by and through power relations (Digeser 1992, 980). Whereas the first three faces assume that *B* may possibly act independently of the power that *A* holds over her, the fourth holds that both *A* and *B* are always being shaped by power relations which they cannot possibly escape (Digeser 1992, 982). To Foucault, *B* cannot hold power over *A*; the power relationship between *A* and *B* molds both *A* and *B* into power's vehicles and induces them both to constantly exercise power through their everyday, socially determined activities (Digeser 1992, 982). In short, power is not something *A* has and *B* does not have. It is rather something that neither *A* nor *B* can completely control but which shapes both *A* and *B*'s self-understandings, perceived interests, and means of engagement with one another. In the fourth face, power is productive (rather than repressive) of subjects, knowledge, and truth; power induces some limited resistances; and power is dispersed throughout society in such a way that no one is responsible for its operations.

The first three faces see power as what *A* uses to repress *B*. The liberal and radical theorists of power see *A*'s machinations to suppress *B*'s interests or compel *B* to act against her own interests as repressive. The fourth sees power as what produces *A* and *B*, rather than one's means of repressing the other. Power itself shapes people's ability to have agency or conceive of their interests and values. Subjects cannot autonomously step outside of power's grasp to conceive of their own interests (Digeser 1992, 980). Thus, there is no repression because there are no essential interests for *A* or *B* to seek after (Digeser 1992, 983). Unlike the liberal and

radical conceptions of power, analyses deploying the fourth face are not geared toward producing normative political prescriptions because, in the absence of any notion of concrete desires or interests, one cannot determine what is and is not oppressive (Digeser 1992, 992).

One way power molds subjects and their interests is by shaping their societies' notions of truth and legitimate knowledge. Knowledge and power are not exactly the same thing, but one cannot exercise power without knowledge or acquire knowledge outside of power (Digeser 1992, 986). In the fourth face of power, knowledge precedes the formation of *A* and *B*. The social discourses arranging society's knowledge influence how *A* and *B* will come to understand themselves. For example, if a popular discourse holds that people are entirely selfish, then *A* and *B* will likely come to see themselves as selfish individuals and formulate their interests accordingly (Digeser 1992, 987). In some ways, the fourth face of power's notion of power's relationship to truth overlaps with the radical face. Like Foucault, Lukes and Gaventa believe that ideology and other forms of knowledge shape how people understand themselves and their interests. Unlike Foucault, they maintain a belief in a true knowledge that ideology obscures. Foucault instead claims that there is no essential truth beyond power (Digeser 1992, 988).

Furthermore, Foucault claims that truth and subjectivity cannot stand outside of power because power is distributed throughout every area of modern social life. Power is so economically distributed across all layers of the social hierarchy that it is quite difficult to ascribe responsibility for power's effects to any one individual or group. Power relations do not conform to any grand design laid out by a class or sovereign. Power is exercised "within the social body, rather than from above it" (Foucault 1980, 39). It emerges through a multitude of contradictory individual actions and wills. Foucault writes that power is "intentional and nonsubjective" (qtd. Digeser 1992, 984). By this, he means that power relations develop as

people pursue their own goals, but these goals do not directly control power's maneuvers. Rather, people's actions to advance their own goals lead to the creation of discourses, knowledges, and technologies that take on a life of their own (Digeser 1992, 984). In a famous example, Foucault claims that liberal reformists invented prisons as a more humane alternative to torture and execution, but the prison system soon took on a life of its own as a means for controlling working class communities and dividing the labor movement (Foucault 1980, 39-40). Thus, everyone together produces a field of power relations that do not statically conform to any one group's interests and are beyond any single individual or group's control; society comes to accept the rules and norms of this field (Digeser 1992, 984)<sup>2</sup>. This view of power is quite different from the first three face's understandings of power because neither *A* nor *B* is completely responsible for the power relations that structure their shared social reality. One cannot peg full responsibility onto *A* or *B* for the situation in which they find themselves (Digeser 1992, 984).

Finally, Foucault emphasizes power's consistent tendency to provoke resistance while conditioning resistance's scope. Resistance always accompanies power because humans are not so pliable that whatever form of knowledge predominates in a given social context can completely shape people's subjectivity (Digeser 1992, 985). However, the types of resistance that emerge in a given context are shaped by the power relations regulating that context. In a well-known example, Foucault talks about how the gay liberation movement's conceptions of their interests and tactics of resistance are shaped by the very social context that stigmatizes homosexuality. The discourse of psychology initially castigated homosexuality as a

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<sup>2</sup> In a revealing passage, Foucault insists that "power is not built up out of 'wills' (individual or collective), nor is it derivable from interests" (1980, 88).

psychological disorder, but gays later used the psychological category of the homosexual as a shared identity around which to organize for recognition (Foucault 1978, 101). Foucault sees gay rights advocates' attempts to articulate their demands within the language of psychology and sexuality as limiting their movement's transformative potential (Foucault 1980, 219-220). Thus, power relations entail resistance, but resisting is not the same as breaking free from power relations. Foucault sees episodes of resistance as useful for studying power relations because power is the most visible where resistance is greatest (Digeser 1992, 985). By transgressing the boundaries of traditions and established practices, resisters may gain a more critical perspective on the power relations that shape them (Digeser 1992, 995). However, there is little to suggest that Foucault (unlike Gaventa and Lukes) believed in any normative obligation to resist power (Digeser 1992, 995).

### **Lukes Responds**

Steven Lukes does not find Foucault's views on power particularly impressive. Lukes sees the notion that there is no true, authentic personality beyond the effects of power as melodramatic and calls Foucault's focus on power's productive qualities "wildly overstated and exaggerated" (Lukes 2005, 90). Foucault's lack of normative standards for oppression and resistance troubles Lukes. Foucault claims that each social context involves a unique set of power relations that structure a unique way of determining truth. Lukes feels as though activists would have no moral anchor for their work if no truth transcended historical context and particular social relations (Lukes 2005, 91). Foucault's notion that resistance, while constantly accompanying power, is always shaped by power strikes Lukes as highly deterministic and exaggerated (Lukes 2005, 95). Lukes acknowledges that there are parts of Foucault's writing which suggest that people have a range of socially-conditioned choices upon which to act within

any power relation. He quotes Foucault's statement that individuals' options are "not something the individual invents by himself," but rather "patterns that he finds in the culture and which are proposed, suggested, and imposed on him by his culture, his society, and his social group" (qtd. Lukes 2005, 96-97). However, Lukes sees this as an analytically worthless rehashing of the commonplace concept of socialization (2005, 97). Rather than an original perspective on power's productive qualities, Lukes sees Foucault's writings as useful only for directing empirical research into the ways people participate in their own oppression (2005, 107), which is ultimately the same thing the radical face of power is helpful for but with less utility for settling normative matters<sup>3</sup>.

In opposition to Lukes, I argue that Foucault's explanation of power is useful for empirical overviews of resistance as well as compliance. By applying Foucault's perspective to Gaventa's empirical work, the next two sections will demonstrate how the fourth face of power realistically frames openings for resistance within specific power relations. By using the fourth face of power to reinterpret Gaventa's discussions of Appalachian welfare politics and community media projects, this paper illustrates the usefulness of Foucault's work for studying rebellion. At no point does this Foucauldian reading of Gaventa relapse into the exaggerated determinism Lukes associates with the fourth face.

### **Appalachian Welfare Politics and the Fourth Face of Power**

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<sup>3</sup> One of Lukes's reviewers claims that Lukes's view of power allows scholars to "understand the power structure without falling into the Foucaultian trap of seeing all social relationships in the same relativistic light" in which "all-dominant and dominated alike – are subject to the same power relations and moral responsibility" (Dowding 2006, 136). This reviewer overlooks Foucault's own attempts to disassociate himself from such moral relativism. Foucault's conception of power is a middle point between vulgar Marxists' arguments that the economic structure (rather than human will and responsibility) is culpable for the world's wrongs and "the existentialism of self-flagellation – you know, how everyone is responsible for everything, there is not an injustice in the world to which we are not accomplices" (Foucault 1980, 189).

This section challenges Lukes's criticisms of Foucault's thoughts on power by demonstrating how the fourth face is useful for realistic analyses of resistance. Understandably cautious in dealing with a sensitive subject, Gaventa limits his critique of Appalachian welfare politics to a second face-style analysis of the corrupt CFV elites' control over the distribution of welfare benefits in the 1960s and 1970s. Gaventa does not expand on the substantial levels of welfare fraud in central Appalachia over the period he considers. Although Gaventa references one protest for increased welfare benefits in the CFV, for the most part *Power and Powerlessness* depicts welfare beneficiaries as politically passive. If Gaventa had deployed a fourth-face style understanding of power to his analysis of welfare politics, then perhaps he would have shown welfare recipients as active resisters to governmental attempts to shape their subjectivities, rather than passive victims of corrupt local elites' political patronage systems. Numerous feminist scholars use Foucault's analysis of power to show how welfare programs produce subjectivities by molding recipients into productive and obedient workers; these commentators sometimes interpret welfare fraud as a form of resistance to invasive and restricting welfare policies. By casting welfare fraud as resistance, one may show that there was much more rebellion surrounding welfare distribution in central Appalachia in the 1960s and 1970s than Gaventa reveals. By exploring the potential for realistic, empirical analysis of welfare recipients' resistance that Gaventa's work neglects, this section counters Lukes's dismissal of the fourth face's analytical usefulness.

Gaventa's discussions of Appalachian welfare politics focus on how local elites limit popular protest by using welfare as a form of political patronage and threatening to restrict their challengers' access to benefits. Poor CFV residents often fear that the Godfather (Gaventa's name for a local powerbroker with deep connections to the AA and local politicians) will use his

control over the court system to prevent his critics from attaining benefits and withhold food stamps from those who do not spend them at his store (Gaventa 1980, 143). Sanctions against politically independent valley residents “may be used or threatened, whether over pension benefits, health cards, food stamps, or the home or job tenure of an individual or an individual’s kin or neighbor” (Gaventa 1980, 254). For Gaventa, the corrupt misuse of welfare distribution is an instance of the second face of power’s operation because residents’ fear of sanction and future defeat prevents them from raising their grievances (1980, 254).

Gaventa’s writing on central Appalachia’s welfare recipients for the most part depicts them as politically passive. Even during the peak of the movements for civil rights and welfare rights, the CFV did not experience many demonstrations over these issues, despite how the valley’s many impoverished residents stood to gain from any expansion of welfare rights (Gaventa 1980, 39). Gaventa mentions one outlier protest for access to welfare. The War on Poverty’s Community Action Programs renewed participants’ self-confidence, which in turn led them to spontaneously protest for uncorrupted access to their entitlements. Food stamp recipients stopped shopping at the Godfather’s store and, when their food stamps were unavailable at the welfare office, forty of them “hired a bus, went to the courthouse, sat in until they got their stamps – and sent the bill for the trip to the welfare offices” (Gaventa 1980, 162). However, the recipients’ newfound rebelliousness waned as the local Community Action Program lost its political independence. The elites co-opted the program by relentlessly red baiting its liberal director and manipulating the courts to replace the director with more loyal leadership (Gaventa 1980, 162-163). The recipients were again subject to political manipulation; some would later withdraw from protesting strip mining while citing “their fear of losing food stamps or credit at the Godfather’s store” (Gaventa 1980, 236). Gaventa suggests that the

regional patronage system is strong enough to severely limit welfare recipients' openings for resistance.

One factor in War on Poverty-era Appalachian welfare politics Gaventa does not touch upon is the prevalence of fraud in the region. The literature on welfare in Appalachia frequently mentions how common fraud was at the time (e.g. Caudill 1974, 144). One can hardly blame Gaventa for neglecting this factor because much of the literature on the topic depicts Appalachian welfare fraud in a very condescending fashion. For example, Harry Caudill alleges that many Kentuckian women intentionally had illegitimate children for the sole purpose of getting more welfare benefits, claiming that "fertile and amoral females resided in every camp and on every creek" and "nearly every mountain woman yearns to have children and few live out their lives in sexual continence" (1974, 148-149). Gaventa, who intentionally stresses structural and economic factors behind Appalachian poverty to disassociate himself such patronizing depictions of Appalachian culture (1980, 41-43), may have chosen to avoid the topic of welfare fraud to sidestep discussions of personal morality and work ethic. However, there is another, more respectful way to discuss welfare fraud. Feminists use Foucault's ideas regarding power to describe fraud as a dignified way for recipients to resist the state's attempts to mold their subjectivity. By applying such a fourth face-style analysis to his discussion of Appalachian welfare politics, Gaventa could have expanded his view of recipients' potential for resistance.

Feminists sometimes use Foucault's work to describe the welfare system as a power relation between welfare recipients and the state in which the state's agents seek to forge economically productive and politically passive subjects out of supposedly lazy, unmotivated beneficiaries. Welfare "acts as the Panopticon of the poor, a disciplinary apparatus that places them under intense scrutiny and compels them to be docile workers" (Fitzgerald 2004, 59). By



dragging welfare beneficiaries through a humiliating and detailed regimen of questioning and surveillance, social workers attempt to instill individualist ideology and practices in recipients. Welfare administrators create new subjects of those who receive aid from programs like Aid to Dependent Children/Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (ADC/TANIF) by invasively questioning, monitoring, recording, and judging recipients (Fitzgerald 2004, 59). Welfare thus serves as a type of panoptic<sup>4</sup> power by shaping subjects through continuous observation and regulation with the intention of making subjects more self-disciplined.

Much like welfare administrators' constant scrutiny of beneficiaries' personal habits, the welfare state is structured in a way that produces recipients' subjectivities by casting some workers as more worthy of state benefits than others. Foucault scholar Nancy Fraser distinguishes between individualized entitlement programs (such as social security and unemployment insurance) and household/family-centered welfare programs (such as Medicaid and TANIF) (1989, 146). The first set of "labor-market-based" welfare programs, like unemployment insurance, serve waged (disproportionately male) workers and code recipients as deserving (Fraser 1989, 150). The beneficiaries of labor-market-based entitlements do not undergo intense administrative questioning because the system treats them as "rights-bearing" and deserving, rather than dependent (Fraser 1989, 152-153). On the other hand, household-centered welfare programs, which disproportionately serve women, code recipients as defective and lazy. The typical ADC recipient not only undergoes condescending treatment from social workers, but also "makes her claim for benefits on the basis of her status as an unpaid domestic

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<sup>4</sup> Foucault frequently references the Panopticon, a disciplinary power technique elaborated by Jeremy Bentham. The Panopticon is a prison in which guards can observe any prisoner's cell at any time of the day while remaining unseen. This allows the guards to constantly monitor the prisoners and forces prisoners to act as though they are always being watched, in turn producing self-disciplined and docile subjects (see Foucault 1980, 153-157; Digeser 1992, 994). Fitzgerald points out that social workers deploy panoptic power by constantly monitoring welfare recipients so that recipients will become self-disciplined (2004, 59).

worker, a homemaker, and mother, not a paid worker based in the labor market” (Fraser 1989, 150). Welfare recipients find themselves shaped through this differential distribution of entitlement benefits which codes wage earners as deserving and homemakers as defective. This inhibits recipients’ ability to define themselves, their needs, and their political situation in any self-directed way (Fraser 1989, 155). Thus, the uneven way the welfare administrators distribute entitlements legitimizes state attempts to mold ADC/TANIF beneficiaries into productive workers and reinforces welfare workers’ attempts to convince recipients that their financial problems derive from a lack of hard work and individualism.

Nonetheless, the welfare state’s attempts to produce hard-working and compliant subjects are never completely successful. Foucault thinks power relations produce subjects while simultaneously provoking and conditioning resistance to subjectification (Digeser 1992, 985). Some of Foucault’s readers cite welfare fraud as one such type of active resistance to the welfare state’s attempts to produce economically useful subjects. For instance, Pemberton draws from Foucault’s understanding of power to describe welfare programs as “an enormous bureaucratic machinery for processing and controlling human behaviors” and fraud as a potential way to resist such control (1990, 125)<sup>5</sup>. Similarly, Luna draws from Foucault to acknowledge welfare fraud as one of several forms of resistance recipients deploy to attain some degree of self-definition (2009, 459) and “minimize the pejorative constructions associated with a welfare identity” (2009, 441).

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<sup>5</sup> Pemberton interestingly (mis)interprets Foucault’s views on resistance, alleging that the persistence of welfare fraud in Australia, despite social workers’ best attempts to control this fraud, discredits Foucault’s notion that modern bureaucratic apparatuses shape human subjectivity (1990, 125). Pemberton overlooks Foucault’s claim that resistance marks power relations (Digeser 1992, 985).

The Invisible Committee's 2007 book *The Coming Insurrection* issues perhaps the most stirring Foucault-inspired defense of welfare fraud. The Invisible Committee draws from Foucault's notion that power relations produce the individual subject. Much like the feminists cited above have argued that welfare policy aims to produce new, individualistic subjects, the Invisible Committee insists that current educational and business techniques encourage subjects to adapt a version of individualism that entails flexibility and endurance in the face of a rapidly changing, post-industrial economy. Educational figures and self-help gurus expect job seekers to develop "endlessly adaptable" selves able to rapidly learn new skills as technology and globalization dissolve any sense of job security. In the absence of stable employment opportunities, neoliberal orthodoxy expects individuals to cultivate their personalities as products to be marketed and view their non-work activities as ways to supplement their personal commodification (Invisible Committee 2007, 29-34). The flexible, productive, and marketable self is an outcome of disciplinary power; it is "the form they wish to stamp on us" (Invisible Committee 2007, 33). To counter such compulsions, the Invisible Committee exhorts readers to resist the "very idea of man," the "fiction of the individual," and the power relations that sustain these illusions (2007, 16). Foucault's consideration of the subject as a product of power relations almost certainly influences the Invisible Committee's rejection of individualism<sup>6</sup>.

The Invisible Committee promotes welfare fraud as a means of resisting disciplinary individualization. The committee encourages insurgents to form communes, their term for autonomous organizations that replace disciplinary institutions like schools, families, and

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<sup>6</sup> Notice the similarity between Foucault and the Invisible Committee's treatment of the idea of humanity. Foucault writes "the archaeology of our thinking demonstrates clearly that man is a recent invention perhaps also approaching his end" (qtd. Ward 2003, 141) and that man will be "erased, like a face in the sand" (qtd. Rocha 2006, 84). Along these lines, the Invisible Committee claims "when all is said and done, it is with an entire anthropology that we are at war" (2007, 16).

factories (2007, 102). People “freed of their individual straightjackets” join together on a voluntary basis to form communes in which they can shape their own subjectivities in a more self-directed fashion (Invisible Committee 2007, 102). Pooling welfare benefits, which may be fraudulently obtained, is one way for communes to assert their strength. By drawing from “various [state] benefits, disability money, accumulated student aid, subsidies drawn off fictitious childbirths” (Invisible Committee 2007, 103) communes may afford their members the financial wherewithal necessary for non-disciplinary self-cultivation.

Had Gaventa considered Foucault scholars’ treatment of welfare policy, then perhaps he would have included an analysis of welfare fraud in his treatment of Appalachian welfare politics. Such an analysis would have allowed him to extend his consideration of welfare recipients’ capacity for active resistance. Rather than merely using the second face of power to explain the relative paucity of protests surrounding welfare distribution within the CFV, he may just have well framed the region’s welfare fraud as resistance against state attempts to form new subjects out of recipients. Such a Foucauldian analysis of welfare fraud would rebut Lukes’s accusation that Foucault’s understanding of power is exaggerated and primarily useful for studying compliance.

### **Community Media Projects and the Fourth Face**

Recall Lukes’s criticism of Foucault’s view that power produces subjects and truth. Lukes finds Foucault’s notion that truths are specific to certain power relations both unrealistically deterministic and useless for discussing emancipatory resistance movements because it does not acknowledge a grand truth that legitimizes such causes (Lukes 2005, 91 and 106). By applying Foucault’s notion of Parrhesia, or “eruptive truth speaking” (Ransom 1997,

164), to Gaventa's examination of community media projects in the CFV, this section shows that, despite Lukes's criticisms, the Foucauldian understanding of truth is compatible with social movements' ability to base their goals in normative frameworks. Gaventa avoids appealing to free speech in his explorations of disempowerment and activism in the CFV because he feels that discussions of legal rights distract from issues related to living conditions (1980, 111). However, he writes about community organizers' close involvement with the filming and distribution of a British documentary on the AA's offenses in the valley and extensively covers a community videotaping project in which CFV residents shared their personal experiences with strip mining. Gaventa uses both media projects to illustrate the second and third faces of power. The projects enabled residents to forgo appeals to pro-AA local media (which the local elites used exercise second face-style power by preventing locals from raising their grievances) and break free of third face-style power by controlling their regional ideology. I argue that the CFV residents' willingness to risk their own safety to create new, context-specific truths and subjectivities exemplifies Foucault's notion of Parrhesia. The projects thereby demonstrate the fourth face because they produce new truths and subjects that, while conditioned by power relations, nonetheless provide normative grounding for realistic discussions of resistance.

Gaventa begins his discussion of community media projects by explaining how elites' control of the CFV's local media disempowers poor residents in a manner consistent with the second and third faces of power. As Gaventa tells it, the CFV's working class's discontent with strip mining would not register with the first face of power because, despite individual misgivings over the practice, they do not often publicly protest the strippers or even share their grievances with each other. Despite having clear grievances as individuals, poor residents do not share their concerns over strip mining with their neighbors even though they frequently discuss

local politics (1980, 206-207). One obvious reason why locals do not publicly demand an end to strip mining is they (for good reason) fear retaliation for speaking out (1980, 206). The local media also contributes to the people's silence on the issue. Local papers are loyal to the AA and rarely cover strip mining's problems and CFV residents rarely read the bigger, urban papers that more frequently report on the AA's misdeeds (1980, 218-219). This aligns with the second face of power: the oppressed have grievances, but elites manipulate institutions (such as the local papers) to stifle expression of these grievances (Digeser 1992, 978).

Gaventa also attributes the CFV residents' failure to voice their concerns with strip mining to the third face of power's effects. Recall that Gaventa sees the Appalachian working class's lack of pride in and independent control over their cultural mythologies and symbolism as stemming from third face-style ideological manipulation (1980, 19). He argues that stereotypical media depictions of Appalachian people as inbred and stupid prevent residents from proudly embracing their own culture and exerting independent control over their ideology, thus leaving them without the confidence and political language they need to challenge their oppressors (1980, 220-221). Programs such as "Hee Haw," the "Beverly Hillbillies," "Gomer Pyle," and general media neglect of oppression within the CFV reinforce a lack of self confidence among the valley's people and retard their collective political agenda setting. In Gaventa's words:

If the mass media normally help to legitimate the dominant values and concerns of a society, the neglect of other values and concerns may ascribe to them a subordinate or unimportant status...Where a positive self-image is not portrayed for a particular group, that group may develop a sense of inadequacy about itself, re-enforced by how other groups project their media stereotypes upon them. Moreover, the lack of coverage of a subordinate group keeps the members of the group isolated from one another, unaware that others similarly situated share common concerns or are pursuing challenges upon common issues (220-221).

The media's stereotypical and neglectful treatment of Appalachia perpetuates the third face of power by ideologically manipulating the region's people in such a way that they will not collectively control their issues or culture, thereby leaving them to (seemingly) voluntarily comply with the elite's will.

The community media programs challenged the region's disempowerment. Community organizers were deeply immersed in the filming and distribution of the British documentary on the AA's actions in the CFV. Filmmakers consulted residents over how they wanted to be portrayed, the community members reviewed and approved the final cut, and the locals exercised full control over distribution of the documentary within the valley. Community organizers organized a speaking tour to accompany showings of the documentary throughout the valley (Gaventa 1980, 223-225). Additionally, the community videotaping program allowed the valley's poor to represent themselves to themselves without the local television stations or papers' mediation. Gaventa writes that the videotaping and playback process granted participants an opportunity "for reflection and self-examination," presented residents "in a realistic, non-stereotyped fashion," and gave "a certain validity to the concerns and ideas being expressed" as well as "confidence to those expressing them" (1980, 222). The videotaping process also gave residents the opportunity to control their ideology, imbuing local symbols and beliefs, such as protestant fundamentalism, with a more rebellious meaning. One resident appealed to religion to speak out against strip mining's environmental impact, exclaiming "God created this world, created this coal, created this timber, and created our wildlife" and "I wouldn't want to damage God's work" (qtd. Gaventa 1980, 223). As such, the community media projects enabled residents to sidestep the biased local media to express their culture and vocalize

their concerns directly, thereby breaking loose from the elite's use of media to exercise the second and third faces of power over them.

With all this in mind, however, the second and third faces were not the only faces operating through the elite and community's media initiatives; the fourth face is also apparent. More specifically, Foucault's twist on notion of free speech, Parrhesia, is apparent the CFV residents' attempts to gain control over their self-representation. An overview of Parrhesia is necessary for clarity's sake. Foucault uses the concept of Parrhesia, which is ancient Greek for "eruptive truth speaking" (Ransom 1997, 164), to disentangle his discussion of speech from legalistic, constitutional notions of free speech. Foucault finds legal conceptualizations of free speech limiting because abstract, universal rights do not speak to the concrete, universal challenges confronting contemporary political actors (Ransom 1997, 158-160; Foucault 1978, 86-89). Parrhesia is a way of speaking freely that legal appeals to free speech do not cover. Parrhesia takes place when an individual or group establishes a new set of truths, subjectivities, and power relations by confronting an authority figure with a deeply inconvenient and contextually-specific truth. The speech act of Parrhesia disrupts the preestablished field of power relations in a given society at a given time because, by taking the risk of challenging authority, the speaker/s elaborate(s) a new set of truths that all others come to recognize (Ransom 1997, 163-165). Parrhesia reflects the fourth face of power because it produces new subjects and truths within specific power contexts (Ransom 1997, 165).

Two examples will further clarify Parrhesia. Foucault references Plato's challenge to King Dionysus as an example of Parrhesia. Plato acknowledges a truth that many people understood but few have the courage to voice, the fact that Dionysus is a tyrant. Just by saying this in public, Plato creates a new set of truths and adjusts the field of power: more people now



break with the truth Dionysus's intimidation had established (the truth that Dionysus's authority is unquestionable). The historical context's power relations now shift as the king's courtiers must confront the fact of their leader's tyranny. The old truth will never again be tenable. Plato likewise takes on a great risk by speaking this truth; Dionysus responds by threatening to sell Plato into slavery (Ransom 1997, 164-165). The example of Plato's confrontation with the king demonstrates how Parrhesia brings risk upon the speaker and produces new truths and power relations.

Another example of eruptive truth speaking, the women's liberation movement, demonstrates how Parrhesia establishes new subjects along with new power relations. Consciousness-raising groups are a "self-transforming practice" in which women produce themselves anew (Ransom 1997, 169). The new subjectivities and truths the women's movement fosters are not covered by universalistic notions of free speech or transcendent truths. For women's liberation campaigners, only women (whose speech is grounded in direct, lived experiences) can speak for women (Ransom 1997, 169). Even as they establish very particular truths and subjectivities, the women's movement nonetheless changes power relations that extend over a broad field of social relations. Men and politicians must acknowledge new realities and play by new rules as a result of this movement; "even the Republican Party endorsed the Equal Rights Amendment for a time" (Ransom 1997, 169). The women's liberation movement thereby exemplifies how Parrhesia transforms power relations while producing new, non-universal truths and subjectivities.

Consider how the CFV's community media projects overlap with the elements of Parrhesia explained above. The valley's residents who participated in community videotaping programs took a clear risk because the local authorities frequently retaliated against challenges to

the AA's mining practices (Gaventa 1980, 206)<sup>7</sup>. Like the women's liberationists, those who participated in the community media projects produced their own subjectivities by drawing from their own experiences and taking control of their own regional culture and symbolism. They likewise opened space for a new truth by enabling people to collectively articulate their (previously unaired) distress over strip mining. The truths and subjectivities the project established were not universal: though they spoke to a reality anyone could potentially acknowledge, the speakers expressed themselves from a very particular standpoint. Finally, the valley residents produced a new set of power relations because they no longer had to rely on the biased local media. They could communicate on their own. Thus, the community media projects demonstrate not only the second and third faces of power, but also the fourth face because these projects produced subjects, truths, and ongoing power relations. As such, a Foucauldian analysis of Gaventa's work reveals that, in spite of Lukes's statements to the contrary, Foucault's writing is useful for realistic analyses of free resistance that do not rely on hyperbolic determinism.

### **Conclusion**

This paper has challenged Lukes's criticism of Foucault's views on power by using the fourth face of power to extend Gaventa's third face analysis of disempowerment and resistance within the CFV. Lukes claims Foucault's assertion that power produces subjects and interests is too dramatic and insists that Foucault's views on power are helpful strictly for their use in empirical analyses of complacency. However, this paper has demonstrated that one can use a Foucault-inspired analysis of the power relations embedded within welfare policy to realistically

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<sup>7</sup> The participants' fear of retaliation was practical. Gaventa notes that the AA's local allies fired upon community organizers' houses and burned down their headquarters (1980, 214-215).

depict Appalachian welfare fraud as a type of resistance against state attempts to mold beneficiaries into economically productive and politically feeble subjects. Such an analysis could greatly extend and improve upon Gaventa's exploration of Appalachian welfare politics, which (with one major exception) paints welfare recipients as politically passive. Although Lukes sees Foucault's context-specific notion of truth as flamboyant and unhelpful for studying activism, a Foucauldian analysis of the CFV's community media programs has shown that Foucault's conception of truth's relationship to power is useful for realistic analysis of protest actions, even those protest actions with strong normative grounding.

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